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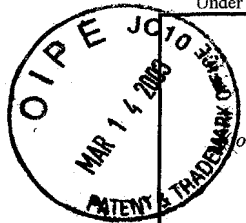
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PTO/SB/21 (08-00)

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TRANSMITTAL FORM

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|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|------------------------|---------------------|
| TRANSMITTAL FORM to be used for all correspondence after initial filing) | | Application Number | 09/752,444 |
| | | Filing Date | January 3, 2001 |
| | | First Named Inventor | Keisuke IMAI et al. |
| | | Group Art Unit | 2834 |
| | | Examiner Name | T. Lam |
| Total Number of Pages in This Submission | 5 | Attorney Docket Number | 740165-278 |

ENCLOSURES (check all that apply)

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Fee Transmittal Form <input type="checkbox"/> Fee Attached <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Amendment / Reply <input type="checkbox"/> After Final <input type="checkbox"/> Affidavits/declaration(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Extension of Time Request <input type="checkbox"/> Express Abandonment Request <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement <input type="checkbox"/> Certified Copy of Priority Document(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Response to Missing Parts/ Incomplete Application <input type="checkbox"/> Response to Missing Parts under 37 CFR 1.52 or 1.53 | <input type="checkbox"/> Assignment Papers (for an Application) <input type="checkbox"/> Drawing(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Declaration and Power of Attorney <input type="checkbox"/> Licensing-related Papers <input type="checkbox"/> Petition <input type="checkbox"/> Petition to Convert to a Provisional Application <input type="checkbox"/> Power of Attorney, Revocation Change of Correspondence Address <input type="checkbox"/> Terminal Disclaimer <input type="checkbox"/> Request for Refund <input type="checkbox"/> CD, Number of CD(s) _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> After Allowance Communication to Group <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal Communication to Board of Appeals and Interferences <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal Communication to Group (Appeal Notice, Brief, Reply Brief) <input type="checkbox"/> Proprietary Information <input type="checkbox"/> Status Letter <input type="checkbox"/> Application Data Sheet <input type="checkbox"/> Other Enclosure(s) (please identify below): <div style="text-align: right;"> <p>RECEIVED MAR 19 2003 TECHNOLOGY CENTER 2800</p> </div> |
| Remarks | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees required or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 19-2380 (740165-278) for the above identified docket number. |

SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT, ATTORNEY, OR AGENT

| | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|
| Firm or Individual name | Thomas W. Cole Nixon Peabody LLP 8180 Greensboro Drive Suite 800 McLean, VA 22102 | | |
| Signature | | | |
| Date | March 3, 2003 | | |

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Docket: 740165-278

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re PATENT application of)
Keisuke IMAI et al.)
Serial No. 09/752,444) Art Unit: 2834
Filed: 01/03/01) Examiner: T. Lam
For: ROLL CONNECTOR STRUCTURE)
FOR A VEHICLE)

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RESPONSE AND REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATION

BOX AF

Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

The following is presented in response to the final Office Action mailed November 29, 2002, which has been received and carefully reviewed. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the new ground of rejection is respectfully requested for the reasons advanced in detail below. In light of the Examiner's refusal to grant an interview to discuss the Examiner's understanding of the detailed teachings of the Masuda ('782) reference and if the present § 103 rejection relying upon the Masuda reference is maintained, the Applicants respectfully request clarification of the teachings of Masuda ('782). Claims 1-4 remain pending.

With regard to the rejection to claims 1-4, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), as being obvious in view of the teachings of the admitted prior art (Figure 3) combined with the teachings of the newly cited Masuda ('782) reference, at pages 2-3, of the final Office Action, the Applicants are of the opinion the Examiner has misunderstood the teachings of the Masuda patent. Specifically, the Examiner states, at paragraph 2, of the Office Action that "Masuda discloses at least one steering switch (23,25) is connected to the rotor side casing (43) without wiring."

However, after a detailed review of the Masuda patent, it must be pointed out that Masuda (Figure 3) teaches a stator-side casing (column switch body 29, integral outer cylinder 31, and under cover 41) having affixed thereto a head lamp switch 23 and a wiper control switch 25 within slots (Figures 1 and 2; column 30-37) in the column switch body 29. The stator-side casing, i.e., the column switch body 29 and integral outer cylinder 31, is fixed relative to the steering column. The patentee also teaches a rotor-side casing (inner cylinder 33 and disk upper cover 43) attached to a steering wheel which includes a switch (squib-connection connector 53) electrically connected to the cable 35 via a connector at one end of the cable 35 (column 4, lines 11-21). Therefore, it is evident that the Masuda does not teach at least one steering wheel switch (squib-connection connector 53) connected to the rotor-side casing 43 without wires as presently claimed. The patentee instead teaches that the switches 23 and 25 are electrically connected to the stator-side casing, via collective connector 55 formed integral with the column switch body 29; while, the stator-side casing is formed of the column switch body 29, integral outer cylinder 31 and under cover 41 and has a separate wired connection to an electrical switch (squib-connection connector 53).

That is, the patentee, in direct contrast to the claimed invention, teaches that the connection of a steering wheel switch (squib-connection connector 53) is performed by connection of one end of the wire cable 35 to the switch (squib-connection connector 53). Masuda contains absolutely no teaching of electrically

connecting switches 23 and 25 to the rotor-side casing (inner cylinder 33 and disk upper cover 43).

As noted the Applicant's previous Amendment of June 19, 2002, M.P.E.P. Chapters 2142-2143.03 set forth that three basic criteria must be met by the prior art to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness. First, there must be some suggestion or motivation, either in the references themselves or the general knowledge of one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify or combine the reference(s). Second, there must be a reasonable expectation of success of the proposed combination, and third, the prior art must teach or suggest all of the claimed limitations.

The Examiner's rejection of claims 1-4, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), discussed above, fails to satisfy all three requirements above for establishing a *prima facie* case of obviousness since:

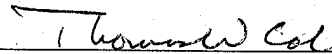
1. No reference or combination of references teaches or suggests each and every feature of claim 1 as outlined above, i.e., at least one steering wheel switch electrically connected to the rotor-side casing without wiring.
2. Nor does the proposed combination of references provide a reasonable expectation of success in that the combination proposed by the Examiner, if made, would not yield the device presently claimed, i.e., it would instead yield a steering wheel switch 53 connected via cable 35 to rotor-side casing 43. The proposed combination would in fact yield an apparatus which is the same as the instant admitted prior art shown in Figure 3.
3. Neither Masuda or the Examiner provide a suggestion or motivation for one of ordinary skill in the prior art to modify the admitted prior art to make an electrical connection of a steering wheel switch to a rotor-side casing without wiring as presently claimed.

For these reasons, the Examiner's rejection of claims 1-4, under 35 U.S.C.

103(a), is believed to be improper and should be withdrawn. However, if maintained, the Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner specifically detail how the "at least one steering wheel switch (23, 25) is connected to the rotor side casing (43) without wiring" in Masuda.

While the present application is now believed to be in condition for allowance, should the Examiner find some issue to remain unresolved, or should any new issues arise, which could be eliminated through discussions with applicants' representative, then the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone in order that the further prosecution of this application can thereby be expedited.

Respectfully submitted,



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